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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 KABUL 002470

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/08/2017

TAGS: EAID PREL PTER PHUM PGOV AF

SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR DISCUSSES SECURITY, COUNTERNARCOTICS
AND IROA SUPPORT IN NANGARHAR

Classified By: Acting Deputy Chief of Mission Carol Rodley for reasons
1.4 (B) and (D).

SUMMARY

¶1. (C) During Ambassador's July 8 meetings in Kabul with members of Parliament from Nangarhar Province and his July 9 visit to Jalalabad, the MPs, Governor Sherzai, and provincial leaders highlighted security concerns, Pashtun community sentiments towards the IROA, and drugs. They expressed support for continued U.S. and ISAF presence in Nangahar but raised concerns over military operations, arrests, and searches. END SUMMARY.

COMBATING THE INSURGENCY

¶2. (C) The Ambassador's July 9 meeting with Governor Sherzai in Jalalabad began with the Governor describing the "mini-jirgas" he recently held to discuss security with Pashtun elders from Pakistan. Sherzai was also holding community meetings with residents and elders from Tora Bora during which he claimed that several had made decisions not to support the Taliban. He told the Ambassador this resulted in some Taliban elements departing from the area.

¶3. (C) Sherzai complained that his inability to maintain security along the border was partly the fault of current Afghan Border Police (ABP) commander Abdul Rahman Akram. Sherzai claimed Akram is not effective because he is from Nangarhar and easily influenced by residents. Sherzai's complaints against ABP Commander Akram are not new. According to PRT officials, Sherzai's influence gives him unofficial, but virtual control over most ANSF in Nangarhar, including the ANA and ANP. This has led to problems at the Provincial Coordination Centers (PCC), where Sherzai has paid ANSF who should be working at the PCC to work at his compound. Unlike the ANP and ANA units in Nangahar, who reportedly demonstrate great deference to Sherzai, the Afghan Border Police under

ABP Commander Akram takes guidance only from the MOI. In the past, Sherzai has paid his own militias of some 300 to secure the border and views Akram as not only insubordinate but inept. PRT officials maintain that Sherzai has generally been very effective at combating the insecurity in Nangarhar but his strong influence over ANSF operations come at the price of allowing Sherzai to promote himself, rather than the central government, as the source of stability in Nangarhar. According to one PRT official, "Sherzai is very effective but has to be reined in."

PASHTUN COMMUNITY SUPPORT FOR THE IROA

¶4. (C) Several Parliamentarians complained of lack of proportionate Pashtun representation within the IROA. They noted that Pashtuns, who are a slight majority in Afghanistan, make up only 30 percent of the IROA. MP Aryan Yoon noted that this was one of the major factors behind Karzai's waning support among Pashtuns. The Ambassador expressed support for Karzai's vision of a government for all Afghans, adding that the question should be how many people within the IROA are actively supporting the Karzai government rather than how many people within the IROA are Pashtun.

¶5. (C) Yoon asserted that Pashtuns felt threatened in their perception that Jamiat-e-Islami holds a great deal of influence within the Karzai government. Many Pashtuns believe that Jamiat-e-Islami members are manipulating the political landscape in their favor by feeding misinformation to ANSF and Coalition Forces

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that have led to the arrest of innocent Pashtuns. According to Yoon, this has exacerbated Karzai's problems among the Pashtun community.

GREATER USG ENGAGEMENT ON ISLAM; LESS INTERFERENCE IN IROA APPOINTMENTS

¶6. (C) Nangarhar MPs and provincial council members asked for more USG support for religious institutions in Nangarhar in order to undercut enemy propaganda. They understand that Afghans know best who could broker peace in their own society, and complained about international interference in decisions on appointments to positions in the IROA.

COMBATING POPPY CULTIVATION

¶7. (C) MP Abdul Majeed attributed Nangarhar's expected increase in poppy cultivation this year to the IROA "losing the confidence of the people who are turning to the hands of the enemy." (NOTE. Despite Governor Sherzai's active campaign against drugs -- including a ten-fold, year-on-year, increase in governor-led eradication -- poppy cultivation in Nangarhar province will increase for the second consecutive year. Early indications from UNODC and the MOI suggest that cultivation in Nangarhar may quadruple compared to the previous year, approach 20,000 hecates. END NOTE.) Another MP, Babrak Shinwari, surmised that the drug problem in Nangarhar was due to the central government not having a unified anti-drug plan for the whole country.

¶8. (C) Governor Sherzai is now chairing a military commission on security and drugs in five zones within Nangarhar. During his meeting with the Ambassador, Sherzai requested a DEA team go after drug labs operating in the Spingarn area of Achin district. Sherzai has conducted his own investigation of who is

involved in the drug trade in Nangarhar. His head of counternarcotics gave the Ambassador a list of district administrators thought to be complicit in the drug trade as well as a list of factory locations. Sherzai announced his plans to travel to Kabul in the near future to meet with the Counternarcotics Ministry to develop a comprehensive anti-drug plan for Nangarhar.

¶9. (C) Sherzai said he is a big supporter of ground based spray and asked for support in bringing it to Nangarhar this year. The Ambassador encouraged him to stress to farmers that poppy loans are dishonest loans, against Islam, and therefore do not need to be honored. He suggested that Sherzai should begin warning farmers now that those who plant poppy in October will have their fields forcibly eradicated in the winter. Sherzai shared that the Shinwar tribe in Nangarhar agreed to assist his government with eradication efforts this year. The Ambassador also suggested a campaign to seize drugs along Nangarhar's highways, allowing Nangarhar to become a model province for anti-narcotics.

¶10. (C) During the meeting with the Provincial Council, members pushed for development projects to build 12 hydro-electric dams on the Kunar River and more roads in the Spingard area. They argued these projects would help combat poppy cultivation by making possible other economic opportunities.

INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY REPUTATION IN NANGARHAR

¶11. (C) The MPs, Governor Sherzai, and Provincial Council members all expressed continued support for

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U.S. and international community presence in Nangarhar. Parliamentarian Mawlawi Ataullah Lordin raised concerns about military operations in Nangarhar and the arrest of locals allegedly based on false information supplied to Coalition Forces. Referring to Coalition Forces searches of homes and searches of women by male soldiers, a religious leader attending the provincial council meeting expressed concerns about what he characterized as a lack of respect for Islam. The head of the provincial council underscored their view that Coalition Forces should conduct operations in closer coordination with ANSF to minimize civilian casualties. The Ambassador laid out USG expectations for the Provincial Council, reminding them of their responsibility to prevent their sons from joining the Taliban and to deny insurgents a safe haven. Failure to do so could lead to more military action with possible unintended consequences for civilian casualties. The Ambassador made similar comments to the local press.

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